



E-NEWS from *Congresswoman Jennifer Dunn*

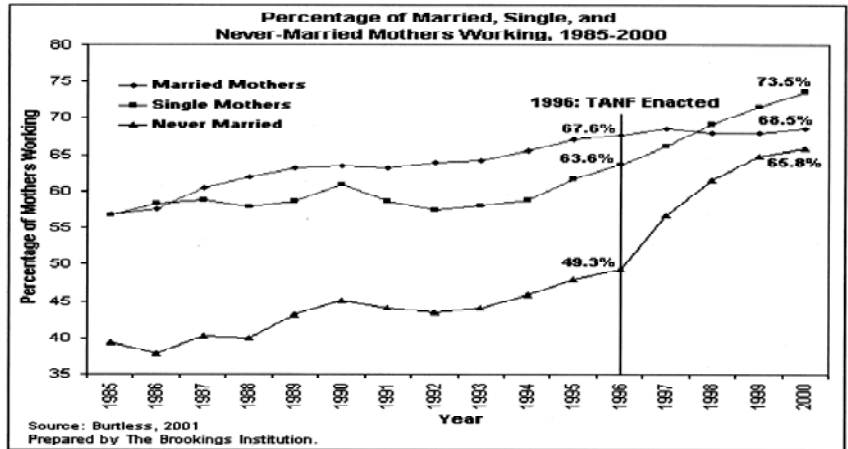
An electronic legislative update for May 16, 2002

Did you know...

In 1996, Congress changed the welfare program from one that encouraged permanent dependence (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) to a temporary program that enables individuals to find jobs and achieve financial self-sufficiency (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families).

Since 1996, the number of individuals in Washington State on welfare decreased by 47%. In addition, more than 70% of single moms now have jobs.

Record Number of Moms Work



What is going on this week?

BILL TO ENHANCE SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS FOR WIDOWS, DISABLED INDIVIDUALS PASSES US HOUSE

A bill, co-sponsored by Congresswoman Dunn, to expand Social Security benefits for widows and widowers, passed the House earlier this week. The "Social Security Benefit Enhancements for Women Act of 2002" will benefit over 120,000 elderly and disabled widows and divorced spouses who are among the most likely to live in poverty. This bill will increase the unfair benefit limit on widows whose spouses both retire and die before the full retirement age. Under Social Security, a person gets a reduced benefit if they retire early. If the husband dies, the widow is forced to live alone on very little money. It will also eliminate a needless two-year waiting period for some divorced spouses to receive benefits and it will update eligibility requirements for disabled widows to ensure consistency with earnings requirements in current law.

US REP JENNIFER DUNN ADDRESSES NATIONAL WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP SUMMIT IN WASHINGTON, DC

Earlier this week, Congresswoman Jennifer Dunn addressed an audience of women from around the nation who came to Washington, DC for the Women's Leadership Summit. Congresswoman Dunn co-hosted the event with Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison and Congresswoman Deborah Pryce, among others. Jennifer spoke about retirement security, including a prescription drug benefit bill that is currently being drafted by Members of the House, and how the current Social Security system is unfair to working women. She spoke briefly about the "Social Security Benefit Enhancements for Women Act of 2002" (see above summary) and how permanent elimination of the death tax is beneficial to women.

US HOUSE TO CONSIDER WELFARE REFORM REAUTHORIZATION, INCLUDING \$2 BILLION ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR CHILD CARE

The "Personal Responsibility, Work and Family Protection Act," also known as the welfare reform reauthorization legislation, will be considered by the US House on Wednesday, May 15. The bill reauthorizes the 1996 reform act which is considered to be one of the most successful social policy changes of recent history. The 1996 reform changed welfare from a program that encourages permanent dependence to one that enables families to find jobs and become financially self-sufficient. (Since 1996, the number of individuals on cash assistance has dropped nationally by 56 percent.) As a Member of the Welfare Reform Subcommittee of Ways and Means, Jennifer was directly involved in writing the 1996 bill and has continued her involvement with the issue throughout the years.

Among other provisions, Jennifer helped secure an additional \$2 billion in the bill to better meet the child care needs of families on welfare. This is particularly important because welfare mothers often hold evening or weekend jobs when child care is less accessible and more expensive. The bill increases from 30 to 40 the number of hours a welfare recipient must work. Of the 40 hour work requirement, 16 hours can be spent on educational endeavors. It provides more flexibility to states to administer various public assistance programs, it provides more time for recipients to participate in drug or alcohol rehabilitation and job training, and it allows special accommodations for parents of children who have special needs.

PIPELINE SAFETY BILL EXPECTED TO INCLUDE PROVISIONS OF DUNN-LARSON PROPOSAL

The House Transportation Committee is expected to consider a bill to strengthen pipeline safety regulations. The bill is sponsored by Committee Chairman Don Young (R-AK) and is expected to include some provisions of a separate pipeline safety bill authored by Congresswoman Jennifer Dunn and her Washington State colleague, Rick Larsen. The legislation would require the Secretary of Transportation to develop a plan to monitor and test the safety of natural gas pipelines on a regular basis, require pipeline employees to meet stronger qualifications and require the operators to work with states to develop emergency preparedness plans. The Dunn-Larsen provisions will increase state oversight of pipelines, require that operators appoint a liaison to communicate with state and local officials and give local communities more access to information regarding pipeline safety. The bill will also require new, mandatory testing of natural gas pipelines. The provision only addresses gas lines since the US Department of Transportation has enacted a separate requirement that liquid pipelines, such as the one operated by Olympic that exploded in Bellingham, be tested every five years.

What we did last week

HOUSE REJECTED BILL DISAPPROVING OF THE PRESIDENT'S ACTIONS REGARDING STEEL IMPORTS

The US House rejected a bill that disapproves of the President's steel import decision. In his efforts to help the ailing US steel industry and protect it from illegal dumping, last March the President proposed imposing a 30 percent tariff for three years on steel imports from countries that are not developing nations and those that do not trade with the US under the provisions of the North American Free Trade Act (NAFTA). Because of illegal steel dumping, 33 US steel companies have either gone out of business or filed for bankruptcy. As an alternative, the International Trade Commission proposed a less flexible plan which would impose a 20 percent, four-year tariff that would not exclude our NAFTA trading partners. Passage of this measure would cause the less flexible, ITC proposal to be implemented. Those who support expanded trade, including Congresswoman Dunn, preferred the President's less burdensome plan and therefore voted against the measure.

HOUSE REAUTHORIZES DOLLARS FOR NORTH AMERICAN WETLANDS CONSERVATION

The House voted to reauthorize the North American Wetlands Conservation Act at \$50 million in fiscal year 2002 and an additional \$5 million in each subsequent year up to \$75 million in fiscal year 2007. The majority of the funds will be spent on cooperative public-private wetlands conservation efforts throughout North America. The bill specifies that 25-30 percent will be spent on projects within Canada and Mexico. Wetlands serve as natural flood control basins and water filters while providing critical habitat for numerous species of fish and wildlife. Within the last 30 years, many programs to reduce wetland loss have been created.

YUCCA MOUNTAIN REPOSITORY SITE APPROVAL ACT PASSED BY THE US HOUSE

The House passed a bill to approve the development of a repository for the disposal of high-level radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel, in accordance with the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982. Currently, about 45,000 metric tons of spent nuclear fuel is stored at 72 sites throughout the country, including three in Washington State. It is estimated that by 2010, the amount of spent nuclear fuel will reach 60,000 metric tons. This proposal would create a single location for long-term storage that would be the furthest from large populations and would be overseen by the US Department of Energy.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT PASSED BY THE HOUSE

The fiscal year 2003 defense authorization bill was approved by the US House earlier this week. The bill would authorize \$383.4 billion for the US Department of Defense, Counter terrorism Programs, Ballistic Missile Defense, supporting US military personnel (a 4.1 percent military pay raise and military construction projects), research and development and military readiness activities, to name a few.

Summary of Press Releases:

US REP JENNIFER DUNN HOSTS ART COMPETITION IN MERCER ISLAND

US Rep Jennifer Dunn hosted the annual congressional art competition, An Artistic Discovery on Saturday, May 11, 2002 at the Home Street Bank Building in Mercer Island. The competition provides an excellent opportunity for students to showcase their creative talents and receive national recognition. The winner of the competition was Tabitha Brown of Mercer Island High School and her entry was an acrylic, self-portrait. Tabitha's portrait will be displayed in the US Capitol for one year along with artwork from other students across the country.

Judges of the competition included; Enumclaw Mayor, John Wise; Associate Curator of Programs and Outreach at Bellevue Art Museum, Laura Becker and Education Coordinator for the Bellevue Art Museum, Maggie Santolla.

US REP JENNIFER DUNN HONORED BY MANUFACTURING AND BUSINESS ORGANIZATION FOR WORK ON PERMANENT DEATH TAX REPEAL

Earlier this week, Congresswoman Jennifer Dunn was honored by the National Association of Manufacturers and the Association of Washington Business (AWB) in Seattle for her tireless work on legislation that will permanently repeal the death tax. Leaders of both organizations call the death tax one of the biggest impediments to family-owned, small businesses. After years of Jennifer's work on the issue, Congress passed a tax relief bill that includes repeal of the death tax. However, because of a Senate rule, the repeal expires in 2011, so she has been working on legislation that calls for a permanent repeal. The House recently passed such a bill and the Senate is expected to consider Jennifer's proposal sometime in June.